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ABSTRACT

Child care services differ in terms of types of arrangements, providers, programs, delivery systems, and children served. This diversity is needed to provide black children with as many opportunities as possible for a good start in life and to avoid limiting them to the one publicly funded child care center in a neighborhood. California's system of child care services provides an example of diversity; the state subsidizes 15 different program types, ranging from child care for migrant workers (located on farm sites) to child care and parent training for teen mothers (located on the high school campus) to alternative payment programs where parents choose the care they want and the state pays the cost. Linking these programs together for the consumer is a network of state funded Child Care Information and Referral Services which provides, free of charge to any parent who calls, information and a referral to the child care arrangement which meets their needs. Despite problems, California is one state in which diversity has been successfully implemented. Some generic outcomes of the California model have great benefit to child care consumers and providers, but possible negative consequences of increasing the variety of publicly funded programs can be seen. However, despite caveats about developing diverse models of child care, without diversity the future in child care will be bleak. (RH)

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DIVERSITY: AN APPROACH TO CHILD CARE DELIVERY

BY

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CHILD CARE

OCTOBER 16, 1985

DIVERSITY; AN APPROACH TO CHILD CARE DELIVERY

When I say child care, most people think...child care center. And child care center conjures up many kinds of images in our minds. For the early childhood educator, a center is a warm, nurturing environment where children are educated and loved, where parents can count on support during the time they are at work. To the nostalgic polemicist, the child care center is a symbol of an undesireable future colliding with a revered past, a symbol of children robbed of mothers willing to stay home to care for them. To most parents who work, the child care center is a convenience and a godsend which enables them to generate income so the family can stay afloat and the childrens' future can be secured. And to the children, the center is where they go to play, eat, take a nap and lose their shoes and jackets with alarming regularity.

But is the whole of child care really described by those three words, child care center? Actually, fewer children are in centers than in any other form of child care, pointing to the inaccuracy of this term to describe the nascent service industry which will accommodate this era's transformation of the family. According to the Census Bureau, in 1982, only 15% of all mothers used child care centers for the pre-schooler's child care (See Chart 1).

These figures indicate that diversity in child care is still typical, and our propensity for the term child care center is probably the result of our own child care advocates driving public policy toward the center based model (which emerged from

CHART 1

CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS OF WORKING MOTHERS: 1982

Table A. Percent Distribution of Principal Type of Child Care Arrangements Used by Mothers 18 to 44 Years Old for Their Youngest Child Under 5 Years, by Marital and Employment Status: June 1977 and June 1982

(Numbers in thousands. Data restricted to employed women having at least one child under 5 years old)

Marital status of mother and principal child care arrangement	June 1982			June 1977		
	Total employed	Employed full time	Employed part time	Total employed	Employed full time	Employed part time
ALL MARITAL STATUSES						
Number of mothers	5,086	3,263	1,824	3,987	2,645	1,342
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	30.6	25.7	39.3	31.9	27.6	40.3
By father	13.9	10.3	20.3	13.5	9.4	21.5
By other relative	11.2	10.3	12.7	12.1	12.3	11.7
By nonrelative	5.5	5.1	6.3	6.3	5.9	7.1
Care in another home	40.2	43.8	34.0	40.4	46.1	29.4
By relative	18.2	19.7	15.6	18.0	20.3	13.6
By nonrelative	22.0	24.1	18.4	22.4	25.8	15.8
Group care center	14.8	18.8	7.5	12.5	14.3	8.9
Mother cares for child while working	9.1	6.2	14.4	10.7	7.3	17.3
Other arrangements[1]	0.2	0.3	0.1	1.0	1.2	0.7
Don't know/no answer	5.1	5.3	4.7	3.4	3.4	3.3
MARRIED, HUSBAND PRESENT						
Number of mothers	4,093	2,524	1,569	3,268	2,070	1,197
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	30.4	25.5	38.0	32.4	27.3	41.0
By father	16.8	12.8	23.1	16.4	11.9	24.1
By other relative	8.8	8.5	9.3	9.6	9.4	9.8
By nonrelative	4.8	4.2	5.6	6.4	6.0	7.1
Care in another home	40.7	45.0	34.0	39.9	46.6	28.6
By relative	18.0	19.5	15.7	17.5	20.2	13.0
By nonrelative	22.7	25.5	18.3	22.4	26.4	15.6
Group care center	13.4	17.3	7.2	11.3	13.2	7.9
Mother cares for child while working	10.5	7.1	16.1	12.1	8.2	18.7
Other arrangements[1]	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.9	1.1	0.5
Don't know/no answer	4.9	5.0	4.6	3.4	3.4	3.2

from: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Special Study Series Series p-23, No. 129, November 1983

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the nursery school and Head Start Movements, and not coincidentally, from school teacher groups advancing the notion that child care should simply be a downward extension of the public schools.) Our public policy response has resulted in almost all direct subsidy of child care to be for center programs with participation indexed to income of the clients. And therefore, in the public's consciousness, when somebody says "child care" the center is the first thing that comes to mind.

If child care centers are not the whole or even significant part of the child care picture, what is meant by diversity? There is diversity by type of:

- o arrangement,(center, home)
- o type of provider, (formal training, experiential)
- o type of program, (curricula a...z)
- o type of delivery system, (welfare dept., school system, open market, employer supported)
- o type of children (rich, poor, infants, toddlers, of different cultures)

Even if it were a desired goal, it would take a lot of doing to eliminate diversity in the child care field. If one aspect of child care were made uniform, all other aspects would still be diverse. And I am going to advance the position today, that we need this diversity, particularly to provide black children with as many opportunities as is possible for a good start in life, not limited to the one publicly funded child care center in a neighborhood.

I am basing my comments largely from experience with the

country's largest and most diverse publicly operated system, the California State Department of Education/Child Development Division. There are 15 different program types subsidized with State funds (see chart 2). They range from child care for migrant workers, located on farm sites, to child care and parent training for teen mothers, located on the high school campus, to alternative payment programs, where parents choose whatever care they want, and the state pays the cost. Each of these programs has a history which is long and too complicated to describe here, but the result, (most of it taking shape after 1976), is diversity in provider type, program type, delivery system, children and arrangement. What links these programs together for the consumer are a network of State funded Child Care Information and Referral Services which provide, free of charge, to any parent who calls, information and a referral to the child care which meets their needs.

Because California is a state which has developed its own child care policies, rather than relying on Federal direction for setting child care precedents, the Statewide system I describe to you is unique. However, since it is the result of the public policy making process, something similar is feasible in other states, if not at the Federal level. Why bother to look at it as prototypical?

o the California system has stimulated the private sector of child care; it is not operating strictly through school systems or welfare agencies. Private proprietary centers as well as non-profits may operate general child care programs and

CHART 2

CONTRACT AMOUNTS BY CATEGORY
CHILD CARE PROGRAMS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA -- FY84-85

STATE BASED MIGRANT	$6,235,174
FEDERALLY BASED MIGRANT	$1,931,369
STATE PRE-SCHOOL	$33,033,557
HANDICAPPED (7 PROGRAMS TOTAL)	$1,069,835
CAMPUS CHILD CARE	$5,750,529
COUNTY WELFARE	$5,637,956
SCHOOL AGE PARENTING AND INFANT DEV. (SAPID)	$4,701,535
JOBS TRAINING AND PARTNERSHIP ACT (JTPA)	$5,700,000
FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES	$4,378,462
CENTER BASED TITLE 22	$8,550,175
ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT PROGRAMS (APP)	$18,177,732
RESOURCE AND REFERRAL (R & R)	$6,521,286
GENERAL - PUBLIC	$130,888,881
GENERAL - PRIVATE	$44,554,435
RESPITE	$1,000,000
TOTAL:	$277,130,926*

* - An additional $1,203,725 was allocated for start-up costs for newly funded agencies (FY84-84) and an additional $3,000,000 distributed to underfunded agencies.

from; Child Development Division, State Deparment of Education, State of California. Robert Cervantes, Ph.D., Director

private non-profits may operate programs under every category except four which are the domain of public schools and welfare departments. Furthermore, through the Alternative Payment Programs, which operate similar to "voucher" models, child care spaces are purchased in the private sector, at parental request.

o In-home, family child care, and center based models receive public support. Though center-based care is definitely the predominant type, family child care is supported thorough the Family Child Care Networks and Alternative Payment Programs. Unlicensed care that meets certain quality standards may be supported as well as in-home child care if circumstances warrant it (e.g. 3 children under the age of 5, needing care).

o Every family has equal access to information needed to locate care and make a good child care choice. There is no area of the State nor any ethnic community which does not have an R&R.

o The presence of more than one program type reduces the vulnerability of child care to various types of political attacks. Even if one type were to be attacked, there is the buffer of the other programs to soften the impact of the blow. Of course, this is a theoretical argument. Any cut is devastating, but each of these program types is a "pet project" of a group of legislators, and cuts in a certain program represents an affront to the authors of the bill that authorized the program.

All is not well in California, however. The first blush of diversity can give way to an embarrassment of problems (political

and otherwise) when examined more closely.

o First, because of the history of these programs, funding is not really equitable. School districts were here first, and they have the most funding, and the greatest per capita cost. Also,because this diversity happened as much by accident as by design, the funds are not distributed in relationship to need, but in terms of who won contracts during many rounds of competitive application. While Los Angeles County has a substantial share of subsidy in its black community, other parts of the state are not faring well at all. (See Chart 3)

o Second, there is not enough money to go around for all the families that are eligible for subsidy. What appears to be a surfeit of riches is actually a multi-million dollar shortfall, for the many low income families on agency waiting lists. This impacts the black communites of the state hardest, because the median per capita income is lower. Therefore, the impact of not having child care subsidy is more likely to result in not working or in having latch-key children.

o Finally, there is an inherent pull on the part of the administrative agency, the State Department of Education, to make the diverse program types "fit" school district models. That is, forms and thinking styles had to be revised to accommodate the private sector providers. And there is still a need for agencies which are not school districts to perform due vigilance on the Division, lest they be treated perjoratively by state administrators.

o Fourth, despite the diversity in services and a very clear orientation that child care is not merely an offset to the State's welfare burden, there is still sentiment to identify child care with family pathology. Just this year, the Governor's own Task Force recommended that the total administration of child care go into the Department of Social Services, which unfortunately carries with it, a "welfare" orientation that child care is for abusive, neglectful families. Also the public perception is that only "those kind" of families would go to the welfare department to get child care, thereby stigmatizing the vast majority of child care users in the state.

The specifics of the California example are useful to a general discussion on diversity for two main reasons---this is one state where diversity has been successfully implemented, despite the problems I mentioned. And as a large public policy "experiment", the California model has some elements of replicability. The replicability aspects deserve review because they illustrate the potential of diversity in future models of child care. There are some generic outcomes of the model which have great benefit to child care consumers and providers.

o Diverse models target diverse groups with child care needs.

o Diverse models can link the private and public sector

o Diverse models can enhance parent choice

o Diverse models permit greater economic integration of children in child care settings, particularly with Alternative Payment Systems.

o These models provide a stable cash flow to providers in low income communities where parent fees are often on a pay as you can basis

If diversity is so wonderful, what are the possible negatives of embarking on a course to increase variety in publicly funded programs?

o Diversity is complex. Without a system of guidelines under which some common language of operation exists, diversity will be synonymous with disaster for everyone involved.
An umbrella agency must assume responsibility for reconciling the different modes of operation and range of fees to be paid to regulate policy under a diverse model. This agency needs to be well picked and well versed so that the inherent tendencies toward rigidity and bureaucratizing do not sabotage the model.

o Diversity can be confusing. Without Information and Referral agencies, a model based on diversity is doomed. Try to imagine a consumer attempting to locate her particular category of eligibility in the yellow pages under child care. People have a hard enough time trying to find a provider, let alone knowing the nomenclature of the particular type of child care which fits their needs. In California, the total budget for Resource and Referral is only 2% of the child care services budget. This is a very low investment for the yield it produces in reducing public confusion.

o Diversity can accentuate basic inequalities in service if not monitored by the advocates of each target group. For example, unless family child care providers make their presence

known, and establish a public image, they are much less likely to get a "share" of the child care pie. This has historically been the case, as parents do not seek family child care as a first choice for child care, thus these providers are less likely to receive voucher payments. Furthermore, since family child care providers usually operate as isolated businesses, rather than as part of a network, they have no organizational mechanism through which they can receive public funds for child care.

Another example would be if child care organizations of any type are not well organized in a given community, the only alternative to be in a position to receive public child care funds is the school district or welfare organization. While the school systems of this country have provided many black people with jobs and an education, they have also been singularly ineffective in providing an education to hundreds of thousands of black children, especially our young males. So should we permit the only child care solution to be the public schools simply because we were not organized for a diverse model of child care? It is necessary for any black organization interested in children to participate actively in a select number of advocate organizations that will be bringing about change in public policy for child care.

Despite these caveats about developing diverse models of child care, I fear that without them, the future in child care will be bleak. We will continue forward on a path now established where child care services are extremely bifurcated with direct subsidy going to child care for the poor in "special"

child care centers, and indirect subsidy (such as the tax credit) going to those who have the ability to pay on a fee-for-service basis. Whether you recognize it or not, such an approach would not only take us back to the most early years and atavistic approaches of the social welfare profession, but also lower the quality of child care. How could this happen? Well, poor children will be in their government funded centers which are likely to minimally regulated if the present posture contiues. And all that will be needed to justify the subsidy for the tax credit is a receipt showing that payment was made to somebody, somewhere for taking care of your children. Surely, one would hope advocate groups could prevent such a scenario, and we all hope parents would make good choices for their children. But let's face facts. Parents will buy what they can afford, and not all parents are informed consumers regarding child care choices. Advocates can only press for standards as long there is public support for them, and legislators have a well of sniffing out public sentiment for open market child care far in advance of our troops.

As black people we need to invest in understanding the potentials and pitfalls of diversity in child care because we are the key consumers of care in both the public and private sectors. For the purchase of private sector child care, we are the leaders in female labor force particpation, for all socio-economic groups. We have, in many respects set the standard that other women are approaching---the standard of managing multiple roles effectively. What happens in this sector and how we may benefit

from changes in it are extremely critical.

As to public sector child care, we certainly present a picture of vulnerability. We are continuing to experience alarmingly high increases in early adolescent motherhood, which results in growing numbers of poor single mothers, which has produced a staggering proportion of our young children becoming potential "clients" of a perjorative child care system. I do not want to suggest that diverse approaches to child care will reverse this situation. But uniform, "one way" centers will do nothing to alleviate it. The SAPID Programs in California, for example, with their location on the school campus have done more to increase high school graduation rates, and decrease second pregnancy rates than any amount of welfare or food stamps, however. In other words, diversity will offer avenues of opportunity for the target groups I have mentioned better than models of limited imagination. Certainly, we must intellectually rise to the challenge of creating and administering child care systems where diversity is the hallmark of the services. Otherwise, we will let child care as an enterprise wither away as a business opportunity for our providers, we will permit our children to be further stigmatized as society's charity cases, and we will not have supported the backbone, or the rib cage, or the heart (whatever you want to call us) of black social organization ---the hard pressed working mother.